

Stolen eagle back in Museum here

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The eagle has come home to roost at the Oakland Museum but authorities are still seeking a historic jewel box.

Oakland police say a giant, hand-carved ivory eagle, stolen along with the box in March of 1978, has been recovered and returned.

But the "Cornstock Jewel Casket," an ornate 7 by 9-inch gold-veined quartz box worth an estimated \$100,000, is still missing.

The suspect, William E. Murray, 24, of Oakland, is scheduled to enter a plea to grand theft and burglary charges Feb. 14 in Alameda County Superior Court.

Oakland police Sgt. Bill Foskett said the preliminary investigation was suspended several months after the theft of the two objects from the political history section of the museum.

But it was reactivated, Foskett said, when Murray, using his real name, allegedly sold the eagle to a San Francisco antique dealer last December.

That proved to be a mistake

because right across the street from the antique dealer who bought the eagle was another dealer who does appraisals for the Oakland Museum. He immediately recognized the eagle.

Oakland police were contacted and started looking for Murray, who was arrested in Portland.

Foskett said Murray admitted stealing the items but gave no reason why. He said Murray told him the jewel box was stolen in 1978 from a San Leandro storage locker where he had hidden it.

Police and museum officials still hope to recover the box. It was made about 1875 by a San Francisco goldsmith and was purchased for the museum in 1969.

It is made of natural quartz heavily veined in California gold in tones of gray and cream.

The interior of the top is recessed and engraved with scenes of trains, Indians and herds of buffalo. The box rests on four legs that are small, female figures.